**BOSTON ABE COMMUNITY PLANNING
PRIMARY DATA REPORT
CITYWIDE SUMMARY**

Fourteen community coalitions covering fifteen neighborhoods used a variety of data collection methods to gather primary data about the status of adult basic education (ABE) in their communities.[1] Particular attention was paid to assessing needs, gaps, barriers, and assets pertaining to the delivery of ABE services. The methods used were focus group interviews and community meetings, key informant interviews, surveys (of staff, programs, and current and potential students), and zip-code analysis.

Navin Associates provided coalitions with trainings on conducting community research and analyzing the results. Each coalition selected its own combination of original research methodologies, developed or adapted its own instruments, and analyzed and summarized its findings. A citywide analysis of the data supplied by the coalitions was conducted by Navin Associates; a summary of the data follows. It is organized by research methodology (i.e., Key Informant Interviews, Focus Groups, Surveys) and includes Findings and summary Key Finding for each subsection. This is followed by a section on major conclusions.

<u>**KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW FINDINGS**</u>
Ten key informant interviews were used to gather in-depth information from individuals in four neighborhoods (Dorchester, North End, South Boston, and South End). The key informants were selected by the neighborhood coalitions. Access to the final ABE report was the only incentive offered to the key informants. Among the 10 interviewed were 7 employers (70%), 2 providers (20%), and 1 student (10%). Although the findings were not statistically significant due to the small sample size, they provided important insights about ABE. The findings from these interviews are as follows.

Needs and Barriers Summary Overview:

The concerns by order of ranking for all key informants was:

60% or 6 of 10:	English/language skills
40% or 4 of 10:	Work related skills
30% or 3 of 10:	Computer skills
20% or 2 of 10:	Writing skills Math skills Lack of goals
10% or 1 of 10:	Cultural competence Child care Lack of ABE program information Lack of self-esteem/confidence Class scheduling Family responsibilities

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[1] In this document, "ABE" is used to refer to all adult education and literacy services including but not limited to ABE, GED, ESOL, and Family Literacy, following the practice of the Mass. Dept. of Education.

Money

Summary By Category of Respondents.

Employers
- ❖ English/language skills topped the list of employers concerns (4 of 7 or 57%)
- ❖ Work related skills were next (3 of 7 or 43%)
- ❖ Writing skills and math skills tied for the third most mentioned concern (2 of 7 or 29%)
- ❖ GED/H.S. diploma, computer skills, cultural competence, and lack of ABE program information each received one mention. (1 of 7 or (14%)

Providers
- ❖ English/Language skills, GED/H.S. Diploma, and computer skills were at the top of the providers list (2 of 2 or 100%)
- ❖ Work related skills, lack of goals, child care, lack of self-esteem/confidence, family responsibilities, and money were mentioned once each (1 of 2 or 50%)

Students
- ❖ Lack of goals among students and class scheduling were the top concerns of the one student interviewed (1 of 1 or 100%)

    KEY FINDINGS
    - ⇒ The needs with the top four rankings (some ties) identified by key informants represented a set of skills that would be necessary for career advancement, namely, English/language, work-related, computer, writing, and math skills.
    - ⇒ The top barrier to success identified by key informants was lack of goals. The following needs and barriers received only one mention, but are worth noting because of the small sample size: cultural competence, child care, lack of ABE program information, lack of self-esteem/confidence, class scheduling, family responsibilities, and money.

FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS
Ten neighborhood coalitions conducted a total of 53 focus groups in 2002 as part of their community assets and needs assessments. Each neighborhood coalition independently developed its own specific tool to guide its focus group discussions and summarized the focus group findings. Most sites provided cash and/or food incentives for participation.

Focus groups were used for several reasons:
- in order to gather more information than would be available from surveys;
- most of the target groups had limited English proficiency;
- focus groups were more cost effective than interviews.

The key findings from the focus group data were analyzed by neighborhood as well as by category of participant. The results are as follows.

Frequency of Recommendations/Needs found by coalitions
- ⇒ More classes of all types to be offered at more times was the most universal of all recommendations/needs expressed, having been reported by 80% of coalitions.

- o Seven out of 8 neighborhoods wanting more class times specifically asked for more weekend class availability.
⇒ 70% of coalitions reported a need for:
  - o More class offerings beyond ESOL, EDP/GED, etc. such as; native language literacy classes, pre-literacy classes, financial literacy classes, and GED in Spanish.
  - o More support of students in the form of translation/interpretation, counseling, tutoring, self-esteem building, goal setting, etc.
  - o There was a strong interest in improving the mechanisms for outreach and marketing of existing services. Specific suggestions included locations for posting fliers, utilizing internet technology, word of mouth, advertising and PSAs.
⇒ 60% of neighborhoods wanted improved collaborations/linkages between ABE/ESOL programs and the community as a way to strengthen and improve programs.
⇒ 50% of all coalitions found a need for:
  - o Child care to attend classes.
  - o More organizing to improve the ABE system by advocating for more funding, working with elected officials, and developing shared resources.
  - o More conversational opportunities built into the programs as well as at libraries and other venues.
  - o Improvements to the general quality of ABE services such as better preparing teachers, improving support and transition.
⇒ 40% of all coalitions found a need for:
  - o More resources to bolster ABE services; such as smaller class size, teachers for different subjects, more teachers, and computers on which to work.
  - o Computer training to better prepare adult learners to meet existing technology demands.
  - o More support and training around job readiness and employment searches.
  - o A range of life skills classes to help with issues such as parenting, teen violence, self-esteem, and essential basic skills such as sewing and cooking.
  - o More support around immigration and citizenship issues.
⇒ 30% of coalitions found a need for:
  - o Transportation to classes.
  - o More outside the class room, hands-on experiences through field trips to schools, churches, shelters, food pantries, and other learning environments.
  - o Improvements and changes in the student assessment system were needed. Some specific modifications included 1) better preparing students to understand the value of ongoing assessment as part of the feedback loop for self-improvement and 2) use assessments to improve the curriculum.
⇒ 20% of coalitions found a need for ABE programs to teach test taking skills to the adult learners so that students understand the value of testing and to gain mastery over standardized test tools.
⇒ 10% of neighborhoods wanted greater attention paid to the learning needs of adults with learning disabilities through program modifications and evaluative testing. Specifically, there was a sense that undetected learning disabilities may have been the root cause of adult learners being un-credentialed, under-prepared, and

consequently in need of ABE services, in more cases then was previously understood.

KEY FINDINGS
> ⇒ There are an insufficient number of classes, creating a pressing need for more classes of all types at all times, including weekends.
> ⇒ ABE services need many forms of improvement and upgrading to provide an expanded array of offerings as well as to improve upon existing services.
> ⇒ Adult learners need more class-specific as well as general life support to be more successful learners.
> ⇒ ABE programs need more financial backing as well as ancillary support through collaborations and community linkages.

By Category of Respondents

It is important to note that a consequence of coalitions devising their own focus group tools and recording/summarizing procedures was that recommendations may appear to have *less or more weight* depending on how the results were written up by the coalition. For instance, if a recommendation about student support was made 8 times in one focus group, it may have only been reported as one comment by that neighborhood coalition. Conversely, another coalition may have reported a recommendation more than once or in more than one way lending it more weight. Nevertheless, the universality of the recommendations was clearly communicated.

Focus Group Breakdown by Categories of Participants

Category of participant	*# of focus groups including this category of participant*	*% of 53 focus groups*
Employers	*4*	7.6%
Adult Learners	*13*	24.5%
Potential Students & Day Care Parents	*8*	15.1%
Literacy Providers	*1*	1.9%
Mixed Groups	*18*	34.0%
Human Service Providers & Other Stakeholders	*8*	15.1%

Employers

Four of the 53 (7.6%) focus groups were held with employers, two small and two large. There were two primary recommendations made by employers:

- ❖ Employers identified a need for more collaboration and linkages between the ABE providers and the business and academic community.
- ❖ Employers discussed the need for ABE programs to assist adult learners with job readiness and employment search skills.

Human Service Providers & Other Stakeholders
Eight of the 53 (15.1%) focus groups were held with human service providers and other community stakeholders. Their top recommendations were:
- ❖ Better outreach and marketing about ABE services.
- ❖ Organize to improve and better fund ABE services.
- ❖ Make more class offerings available.
- ❖ Improve collaborations/linkages between ABE programs and other resources.
- ❖ Improve the general program quality of ABE services.

Adult Learners
Thirteen of the 53 (24.5%) focus groups were held with adult learners. Adult learners made recommendations in almost every category, with greater frequency in the following:
- ❖ More classes at all times, including weekends.
- ❖ Better outreach and marketing about ABE services.
- ❖ More student support (tutoring, etc.)
- ❖ Improve the general program quality of ABE services.
- ❖ More classes in general life skills
- ❖ Further education opportunities
- ❖ More job readiness/job search support
- ❖ Computer training

Potential Students & Day Care Parents
Eight of the 53 (15.1%) focus groups were held with potential students and day care parents. Their top recommendations were:
- ❖ More classes at all time, including weekends.
- ❖ Organize to improve and better fund ABE services.
- ❖ More classes in general life skills.

Literacy Providers
One of the 53 (1.9%) focus groups was held with literacy providers. Their recommendations were spread out across many concerns with the top recommendations being:
- ❖ Better outreach and marketing about ABE services.
- ❖ More collaboration and linkages between the ABE providers and the business and academic community
- ❖ Provide more resources to improve program quality.

Mixed Groups
Eighteen of the 53 (34%) focus groups were held with a mix of the above categories of individuals. Their top recommendations were:
- ❖ Improve test taking skills.
- ❖ Organize to improve and better fund ABE services.
- ❖ Better outreach and marketing about ABE services.

❖ Improve student assessment.
❖ More classes at all time, including weekends.

KEY FINDINGS

⇒ Focus group participants recommended more classes at all time, and on weekends.

⇒ Despite the limited slots currently available, all categories of participants, except employers, expressed significant interest in improving marketing and outreach to potential students.

⇒ The many recommendations made to organize to improve ABE (lobbying, increasing funding, etc.) were primarily made by human service providers & other stakeholders, potential students & day care parents, and mixed groups.

⇒ With only one focus group of literacy providers and 4 small focus groups with employers, all but employers and literacy providers recommended the following:
  o Improve the general program quality.
  o Improvements in the area of student support.

⇒ There was near unanimous agreement (all, except employers) that ABE services should include:
  o More life skills classes.
  o More computer training opportunities.

⇒ Recommendations about job readiness/job search, further educational opportunities, student assessment, test taking, conversational opportunities, computer training were made with noticeable frequency by participants.

Barriers Identified by Neighborhood Coalition Focus Groups:

⇒ 100% of neighborhoods identified child care as a barrier.
⇒ Job schedule and class schedule were identified as barriers in 9 out of 10 neighborhoods.
⇒ 80% of neighborhoods identified language limitations as a barrier.
⇒ The size of waitlists and family obligations were barriers in 70% of neighborhoods.
⇒ In 60% of neighborhoods, time, transportation, lack of information and lack of classes were cited as barriers.
⇒ Money was a deterrent in half of all neighborhoods.
⇒ In 4 out of 10 neighborhoods, fear of the INS (Immigration Naturalization Service) and a lack of tutors were concerns.
⇒ A lack of case management services was identified in 30% of neighborhoods as a barrier.
⇒ Native language literacy was lacking in 2 neighborhoods.
⇒ While learning disabilities were identified as a barrier by only one neighborhood, it is worth noting.

KEY FINDINGS:

⇒ Eleven of the 21 significant barriers for students in relationship to their ABE pursuits were shared by at least half of all neighborhoods.
⇒ Child care was the one barrier identified by all neighborhoods.

⇒ Many of the demands that push students to pursue ABE services are the very ones that serve as barriers to students. Examples include physically demanding and low paying jobs with little flexibility, family responsibilities, lack of money, language limitations, transportation, and lack of child care. Students also lack information to make decisions.

ZIP CODE SURVEY ANALYSIS
Each coalition was asked to survey the ABE providers in their coalition regarding the zip codes of the place of residence of their adult learners. Data was provided by 38 providers on forty-three programs (some providers responded separately regarding more than one program).

FINDINGS
⇒ According to the student zip code analysis, a total of 43 ABE programs are offered in the 14 following neighborhoods:

Neighborhood	**# of Programs**
Allston/Brighton	2
Charlestown	1
Chinatown	5
Dorchester	6
Downtown Boston	10
East Boston	1
Fenway	1
Hyde Park/W Roxbury	1
Jamaica Plain	2
North End	1
Roslindale	3
Roxbury	3
South Boston	3
South End	4
TOTAL	**43**

⇒ There are a total of 6,528 ABE slots in the City of Boston.
⇒ 79% of Boston ABE slots are filled by residents of Boston.
   o 33% of slots are filled by learners residing in the same neighborhood in which they are enrolled
   o 46% come from other Boston neighborhoods.
⇒ Mattapan has the 8th highest enrollment by zip code within the city in ABE classes, but itself contains no classes.
⇒ East Boston Harborside Community Center (96%) and Charlestown Community Center (83%) have highest enrollments from primary neighborhoods (attributed to the relative geographic isolation of these two communities).
⇒ 21% of Boston ABE slots are filled by residents of cities and towns other than Boston
   o The five zip codes from outside of Boston with the highest enrollment are: Malden 02148; North Quincy 02171; Quincy 02170; Quincy 02169; and Revere 02151.

o The top ten programs with the highest enrollment of students from cities and towns other than Boston are in the central Boston area and were reported by The Downtown Initiative for Adult Literacy (5), the Chinatown Community Educational Partnership (4), and the North End Adult Literacy Coalition (1).

⇒ A limitation of the zip code analysis is that it is unknown how many residents of Boston are enrolled in non-Boston ABE program.

KEY FINDINGS:

⇒ Adult learners in 2002 who live in Boston tend to enroll in ABE programs outside of the neighborhood where they live, rather than they in their own neighborhood (Charlestown and East Boston are the greatest exceptions to this). This could be attributable to such factors as: such as convenience to work; convenience to public transportation, availability of desired classes; recommendations by current students; a preference for another setting, e.g., downtown; or the desire to avoid being recognized and possibly stigmatized by neighbors.

⇒ Downtown programs attract the most adult learners from other neighborhoods as well as from outside of Boston.

⇒ Particular programs may attract concentrations of students of particular linguistic backgrounds to their programs if they are perceived as having an expertise with these communities. Two examples are: 1) Adult learners coming from Quincy, which has a large number of Chinese speaking residents, largely attend ABE programs in Chinatown. Likewise, Jamaica Plain seems to attract a larger concentration of Spanish speakers from across the city and beyond.

SURVEYS SUMMARY: NEEDS AND BARRIERS BY NEIGHBORHOODS AND RESPONDENTS

Five neighborhood coalitions conducted surveys on the needs of and barriers for adult learners. The participating neighborhoods were Charlestown, East Boston, Fenway, Jamaica Plain, and the North End. Each coalition developed its own survey tool and made its own decisions about which population to sample. Each neighborhood also devised its own summary report. The respondents were categorized into the following groups for purpose of analysis by Navin Associates: mixed populations, potential students, providers, currents students and employers. Consequently, the sample size changed from issue to issue. The sampling of certain categories of respondents (e.g. employers and providers) was small - - making their influence on the overall outcome less significant, even if an issue were identified as a significant need within a particular category of respondents.

Needs Summary Overview:

⇒ ESOL was the only need identified by every participating neighborhood. Sampling about ESOL was done among 732 participants, of which 42% of respondents identified it as a need.

o 100% of current students identified ESOL as a need.

⇒ Computer skills emerged as a significant need among 38% of the 638 sampled. In addition, Jamaica Plain did a separate sampling of English and Spanish speaking residents on computer specific needs/interests which was not included in these figures. "Most" of the 260 residents surveyed were "interested in taking computer classes".

      o   100% of current students identified computer skills as a significant need.

⇒ While only 18% of the total 676 individuals surveyed saw a need for ABE/Basic English & Math Skills/Pre-HS/GED Preparation, the figures were much higher among employers and potential students. 67% of employers and 35% of potential students identified this as a need.

⇒ Nearly half of surveyed providers saw GED/HS Diploma or ADP/EDP as a need, however when included in the overall tally this dropped to 6% of all respondents.

⇒ Citizenship was a need seen by 40% of providers, but only by 12% of potential students.

⇒ More than three-quarters of the providers saw a need for health education, but when tallied with the mixed group, the need for health education dropped to 5%.

⇒ 10 of the 13 providers surveyed on native language literacy sited it as a need. Providers were the only respondents surveyed on this need.

⇒ One hundred percent of the 55 individuals surveyed in the North End were current students who unanimously identified tutoring as a need. This was the only sampling conducted on tutoring.

Barriers Summary Overview:

⇒ Child care was seen as a barrier to accessing ABE services by 30% of respondents. Among providers this jumped to 77% and among potential students to 65%.

⇒ Transportation was seen as a barrier for 14% of all respondents.

⇒ Jamaica Plain was the only neighborhood that surveyed residents on job schedules, finding that nearly a quarter of the respondents did perceive it as a barrier.

⇒ Jamaica Plain residents were also the only ones surveyed on whether money was a factor in accessing ABE services and it was found that for 30% of respondents it was a barrier.

    KEY FINDINGS

    ⇒ There was wide variation among the different categories of respondents about ABE needs, significantly affecting the overall totals. For instance, 42% of respondents overall cited ESOL as a need, yet in three out of four categories of respondents the response was 60% or more. The lower total average was a result of these differences in sample sizes among categories of respondents.

    ⇒ 100% of current students found ESOL, computer skills, and tutors to be needed.

    ⇒ The top three needs cited by providers were native language literacy, family literacy, and heath education.

⟹ The top need of potential students was ESOL.

DATA ANALYSIS REPORT: AGGREGATE SURVEY

Forty-eight programs responded to surveys about ABE services and student enrollment. The returned surveys covered programs from 14 neighborhoods. The information was obtained by the neighborhood ABE planning coalitions and analyzed by Navin Associates in 2002.

FINDINGS:
⟹ Programs have been in operation from 1 to 36 years with an average of 17 years.
⟹ More than half of the programs have been in operation for 16 or more years.
⟹ A majority of programs (69%) receive at least some funding from the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE).
⟹ A quarter of programs receive funding from the City of Boston.
⟹ While 35% of programs reporting funding from only one source, 42% receive funding from three or four sources.
⟹ Nearly half of all programs receive funding from private sources and 50% of programs report also receiving funding from "other" sources.
⟹ Only one program reported receiving student tuition as a funding source.
⟹ A majority of programs (88%) report keeping a wait list.
⟹ The average length of time that students were on wait lists varied from less than 6 months to 24 months.
  o Waitlists in 35% of programs were less than 6 months.
  o Waitlists in 25% of programs were exactly 6 months.
⟹ The size of waitlists varied from a minimum of four to a maximum of 500.
  o 48% of programs had average wait list sizes of 99 people or less.
  o 21% of programs had average wait list sizes of 200 or more people.
⟹ ESOL and technology education courses are the most widely offered across programs (by 50% or more of responding programs).
⟹ ABE and GED/EDP/ADP courses are offered by more than 45% of programs.
⟹ Native language literacy, family literacy, homeless, education, workplace literacy and other courses are offered least often by programs (10% or fewer).
⟹ The average number of classes offered is 4.
⟹ Courses are most often offered in the morning and during the week then on the weekend.
  o 81% of programs offer courses in the morning.
  o 52% of programs offer at least some courses in the evenings.
  o 35% of programs offer at least some courses in the afternoons.
  o 27% of programs offer courses on the weekend.
⟹ Approximately two-thirds of all ABE students are female.
⟹ Students age 24-44 are the most frequently served with 50% in this age bracket.
⟹ The remaining 50% of students are split evenly between being younger than 24 and older than 44 years.
⟹ Programs reported an ethnically diverse student body.
  o 12% of students were White.
  o 20% of students were Black or African American.
  o 24% of students were Asian.

o 27% of students were Hispanic or Latino.
⇒ Programs reported a linguistically diverse student body.
  o 22% of students spoke Chinese at home.
  o 24% of students spoke English at home.
  o 28% of students spoke Spanish at home.
⇒ Some coalitions returned surveys from more than one program.
  o Charlestown, East Boston, Fenway, Hyde Park, and the North End each returned one survey (2 of total%).
  o Allston/Brighton returned two surveys (4%)
  o Downtown, Jamaica Plain, and Roslindale each returned 4 surveys (8%).
  o Dorchester and Roxbury each returned 6 surveys (13%).
  o The South End returned 8 surveys (17%).
  o Chinatown returned 10 surveys (21%).

KEY FINDINGS:
⇒ There is significant depth of experience within the city of Boston in regard to ABE with 17 years being the average length of a program being in operation.
⇒ While courses are offered throughout the week and on weekends and at a variety of times, almost every program is oversubscribed and waitlists can be long.
⇒ More courses at all times are needed to meet the demands of already oversubscribed programs.
⇒ Most programs receive funding from the Department of Education, in addition to other sources.
⇒ Despite the varied funding patterns of the programs, the need for additional funding may be suggested by the need for many programs to keep wait lists.
⇒ Programs serve a linguistically and ethnically diverse population.

DATA ANALYSIS REPORT: STAFF SURVEY

This report summarized the analysis of the Staff Survey data provided by fourteen local coalitions. Surveys from 234 staff members were included in this analysis. Staff were asked to respond to surveys about ABE services and student participation. The data are self-report and anonymous. The information was analyzed by Navin Associates in 2002. No incentives for participation were offered.

FINDINGS:
⇒ Among the 234 adult education staff members were:
  o 163 teachers
  o 36 coordinators
  o 13 counselors
  o 22 other staff members.
⇒ All neighborhoods were not equally represented in the data, because some have more programs and/or had a higher response rate.
⇒ The majority of surveys were completed in reference to the following classes: ESOL (55%), ABE (35%), and GED (35%).
⇒ Less than 4% of the surveys were completed in reference to the following classes: EDP, citizenship, diploma, YPP.

⇒ 82% of programs make use of technology in some way in their programs.
⇒ There were many interrelated obstacles identified that hamper student success, with the major symptom being inconsistent student attendance. The reasons identified for poor attendance were:
  o Conflicts between employment schedules and demands, family responsibilities.
  o Many adult learners are at the lower end of the economic spectrum with physically demand jobs that make some students too tired at the end of the day.
  o Transportation and child care needs.
⇒ Well-coordinated social services were suggested as a way to mediate obstacles faced by students.
⇒ Several themes emerged in staff beliefs about assets that promote student success:
  o Characteristics of students: determination, motivation, perseverance, and a desire to learn.
  o Attitudes of students: belief in importance of education, respect for teachers/learning, and willingness to learn English.
  o Behavior of students: regular/consistent attendance, ability to set goals and work hard.
  o Teacher/Program Characteristics: caring, experience, professional teachers, relevant curriculum, teacher support.
⇒ Staff identified similar services needed by students:
  o Affordable child care was mentioned by 95% of neighborhoods.
  o Social services such as: case management, housing, clinical/psychological counseling, job placement.
  o Education-related support such as tutoring and access to materials.
⇒ With many staff being new to programs, they were less able to identify changes in student body with the two most outstanding being.
  o Classes are becoming more culturally diverse. Specifically, they noted more immigrants or ethnic students who speak a language other than English.
  o Students with learning disabilities are an emerging concern across the city.
⇒ The types of classes most needed, but least present were ESOL-ABE bridge and GED/College bridge classes. Also needed were family literacy, citizenship, and advanced ESOL.
⇒ The gaps in services fell into several main categories, including: related services needed, expanded course offerings needed, funding increases needed, and other issues. Of particular mention was the need for child care services and special assistance for students with learning disabilities. The issue of inadequate staff salary was also mentioned.

KEY FINDINGS:
⇒ Students need more support to overcome the many obstacles they face in being successful students.
⇒ Well-coordinated social services were suggested as a way to mediate obstacles faced by students.
⇒ Personal attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics are closely linked to student success according to a majority of staff surveyed.
⇒ The school setting also has a significant influence on the likelihood of success.
⇒ 95% of neighborhoods identified affordable child care as a significant need.

CONCLUSIONS

The citywide research consisted of these main elements:
1. Analysis of citywide zip code data on students receiving ABE services.
2. Citywide analysis of 53 focus groups held in 10 neighborhoods with: adult learners, employers, literacy providers, human service providers & other stakeholders, potential students & day care parents, and mixed groups of the above.
3. Analysis of 10 key informant interviews from 4 neighborhoods.
4. Analysis of data from a staff survey covering 14 neighborhoods with 234 responses.
5. Analysis of aggregate data on 48 ABE programs and the services they provide.
6. Citywide analysis of survey data on the needs and barriers of 745 individuals in five neighborhoods

The findings from this research leads to the following conclusions.

There is a strong need and demand for adult education services throughout Boston.

◆ There is a pressing need for more ABE services of all kinds throughout Boston. Demand for slots grossly exceeds availability of ABE slots. Not only is there a demand for more of the existing classes, but also for more class offerings, such as: further education opportunities, native language literacy, life skills, and more.

◆ More classes are needed at all times, especially at night and on the weekends.

◆ Respondents want more job readiness/employment search support.

◆ More services in the form of student support are also greatly needed to ensure the success of students. In addition to translation, counseling, self-esteem improvement, and tutoring, a need for well-coordinated social services is also recommended.

◆ Roughly 20% of the demand for services is from non-Boston residents

Improvements to ABE services are indicated.

◆ All categories of respondents indicated that more resources need to be dedicated to improving the quality of ABE services. Respondents want smaller class sizes, better materials, more teachers, and more comprehensive services.

◆ Respondents believe it is necessary to organize to improve the ABE system by obtaining additional funding, collaborating and coordinating more with each other and allies, supporting community alliances, and developing shared resource directories.

The most significant barrier to participation in adult education services, among several, is the conflict between work schedules and class schedules.

◆ Many adult learners are at the lower end of the economic spectrum, their jobs are often physically demanding, require long hours, or have variable schedules. They are also more likely to be working more than one job to meet their financial obligations. These factors pose several significant barriers.

  o Over-tired students with inflexible schedules are less likely to maintain consistent attendance, complete assignments, and, in general, be successful learners.

  o The conflict between work schedules and class schedules, coupled with the lack of availability of slots, keeps many potential students away from the classroom entirely.

◆ A lack of affordable and reliable child care presented a significant barrier to participation in adult education services.

◆ Language limitations were seen as obstacles by respondents, in part, because potential students lack accurate information about how to access ABE services and that they can access these services.

◆ Wait lists are long for potential students with immediate need for ESOL and other skills necessary to succeed in this economy. Without the skills they seek, they may be unemployable or employable in low skill dead end jobs or in untenable working situations. Waitlists range from a minimum of one month to a maximum of 24 months across all programs. Although 35% of program wait lists require students to wait less than six months, 25% put the average wait right at 6 months.